

REMINISCENCES

—OF A—

Winter in the South of France.

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A LECTURE

—ON—

THE PYRENEES, PAU, LOURDES, &c.,

DELIVERED AT, HALIFAX, N. S.

—IN AID OF THE FUNDS OF—

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul,

→*BY M. B. DALY, B. A.*←

BARRISTER-AT-LAW, &c.,

Member of the House of Commons of Canada, for the City and County of Halifax,

JANUARY, 1879



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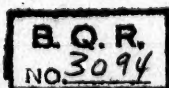
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LECTURE.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

I have yielded to the solicitations of my fellow-members of the Society of St. V. de Paul to repeat a lecture I had the pleasure of delivering last year, solely and simply for the purpose of adding to the funds—now nearly exhausted—of a most worthy institution; and I can assure you that I have consented to do so with much diffidence and reluctance. With diffidence, because I am but too well aware of my inability to fulfil the expectations of the kind audience who have assembled here to-night; and with reluctance, not only on account of a natural distaste for appearing in public (a species of complaint with which members of my profession are not frequently believed to be afflicted—but which, I can assure you, in my case is very fully developed, and is, indeed, entirely constitutional) but also on account of the manifold difficulties which a lecturer must always encounter in his endeavours to instruct and amuse his hearers—and more than this, the fact that there are so many amongst us who might have been called upon to perform this duty, whose eloquence and learning would have more than compensated you for my own deficiency of both those enviable qualifications. However, both my diffidence and my reluctance have had to yield to the urgency of our necessities, and relying on the generous forbearance with which my efforts are likely to be received by my hearers, I undertake the duty that has been assigned to me.

My first embarrassment has been the choice of a subject upon which to address you. Were I to select one from the class of topics with which I ought to be most familiar; were I, in fact, to deliver an essay on international law—the law of contracts or of wrongs,—of criminal law, or equitable jurisprudence, or any of their minor branches or sub-divisions, I might, indeed, find myself more at home; but not desiring to furnish you with information, which we lawyers have a strange peculiarity of always wishing to be paid for, and fearing that the treatment of such dry and matter-of-fact subjects, however lightly dealt with, might prove too great a tax upon your good nature, I have preferred to

run the risk of being somewhat egotistical, and to collect together for you, in as coherent and orderly a shape as the time at my disposal has permitted, a few of my reminiscences of a winter in the south of France.

And now, in the first place, as I am going to ask you to accompany me on a long and varied journey, I hope you will agree with me in thinking that the sooner we become on the most familiar and confidential terms, the better we shall enjoy each other's society, the more agreeable will be our travels, and the better pleased shall we be on our return to our respective homes. It is in this spirit, then, and with these objects constantly in view, that I lay aside the character of a lecturer, in the usual acceptation of the term, and assume that of a fellow-traveller talking familiarly over the incidents of his wanderings or describing the scenes of interest or of beauty that have attracted his notice and deserve attention.

The hawser is cast off from the wharf, the final wavings of the handkerchiefs are made from the land, and the noble steamer is rushing on her way, leaving the shores of old Chebucto, already growing dim and misty in the distance. What grand institutions, we exclaim, are these splendid lines of ocean steamers! what improvements upon the packets and sailing vessels of the olden times, which we have so often heard our fathers speak of! How much we owe to the enterprise of Sir Samuel Cunard, Sir Hugh Allan and the rest of them! But hardly do these thoughts or ejaculations arise, before the traveller, unaccustomed to the rough usage of the sea, begins to find his feelings of homesickness ripening into a sickness of a still more miserable character. When the bowsprit of his steamer is, at one moment, as Mark Twain has described it, pointing directly at the sun, and in the next seems to be intent upon spearing some marine monster in the depths below; then it is that, with me at least, forgetful of all that is due to the great men I have alluded to, a feeling of longing for something steadier than even a Cunarder seizes upon me. Oh for the coming man who will span the Atlantic with a bridge, or invent a preventive or cure for sea-sickness! What a monument he will deserve from the gratitude of a world of sea-sick land-lubbers like myself. But let us praise the bridge that carries us safely over; and until we find the future benefactor I have just referred to, let us hope that we may never be without the advantages that our present direct communication with the mother country gives us.

Again on *terra firma*, we find ourselves in the great commercial metropolis of old England. Scenes of activity and enterprise meet our view on every side ; the wealth of trade created and built up by the industry of a prosperous nation, seems to surround us at every turn. But pass these things by, and let us pursue our journey till we get to Paris. Here, in that queenly capital of France, let us pause and rest awhile. Not that I am going to tell a twice-told tale, or weary you with descriptions of things that every one has either seen or heard of, but in this centre of so much elegance and beauty, of pleasure and frivolity as well as of learning and of art, we cannot help delaying a moment to admire and ponder on what we see. What is this stately pile of buildings—so elegant in its architecture, but now roofless, dismantled, and in ruins? It is the palace of the Tuilleries, once the abode of kings and emperors, where all that was noble and distinguished in the court of France had its head and centre ; now a monument of the country's disgrace. It is as black and shapeless as the crime that brought about its ruin—a self-inflicted stab—the work of a Communistic vandalism, which spared not the beauty of a structure that had been allowed to escape the shot and shell of a more generous enemy. Here and there, throughout the city can be seen the traces of the recent seige, but none of them can compare with the ruthless ravages committed by the rabble of the Commune. In the cemetery of Père la Chaise we again see the result of that short reign of terror. Here the armed members of the Commune made their last stand against the victorious troops of the Versailles Government. A large mound marks the burial place of hundreds of their number, while the disfigured and shot-marked monuments around give us the history of their deeds. It is winter time, the streets and boulevards are covered with snow, the ponderous 'bus horses are slipping and falling down in every direction, the pleasure of sight-seeing becomes a task, it is cold and dreary, the swallows have taken their southward flight. Why should we not follow them? From Paris we journey by rail to Bordeaux. And here let me pay a passing tribute to the order and regularity with which railroad travelling is conducted in France. The trains do not travel at as high a rate of speed as they do in England, but this is more than compensated for by their greater safety ; accidents such as we often hear of, both in England and the United States, accompanied by loss of life, seldom occur in the continent of Europe. The railroads are under Government management,

and worked upon a most methodical system, while the officials are, generally speaking, most careful and attentive. Passengers are shut up in the waiting rooms, and not allowed on the platform of the station till a few minutes before the train leaves, when they at once take their seats ; in this way obviating much of the confusion and bustle one is accustomed to find elsewhere.

After leaving Bordeaux, we pass for some miles through forests of pine. At first sight we can almost fancy ourselves back in Canadian scenery, but on closer observation we see at once that this is not the forest *priméal*. The trees extend in vast but regular rows. At one time, as we rapidly speed on our way through them, they appear old and of full growth, and then we come to groves of younger trees planted in the same regular rows. Observe how they are all partially stripped of their bark, and they have cups or little earthen troughs attached to each of them to catch the falling sap. These forests are the source of immense wealth, they produce quantities of turpentine, the staple article of commerce of this part of the country. Near here is Arcachon, a favorite resort for patients suffering from consumption and diseases of the lungs. The healing properties of the air, from the aroma of the surrounding pine forests, are well recognized, and have produced many remarkable beneficial results.

We now approach the head-quarters of our winter's sojourn—Pau, the chief town of the department of the Lower Pyrenees. The railroad brings us to it by the borders of the River Gave, and the town is built upon the heights above. The first object that arrests attention in the town itself is its magnificent old castle or chateau. Its battlemented towers and ivy-covered walls tell us at once that it has a history attached to it, and that it has been connected with the olden days of the kingdom. It had its beginning towards the close of the tenth century, and was for many years the residence of the kings of Bearn, as this part of France is still called. It is grand and massive in its appearance, and almost colossal in its size. It blends the highly ornamented Gothic with the more sombre Roman style of architecture, having been built, enlarged, and re-built according to the prevailing form of the various centuries since its foundation. Here King Henry IV. of France was born, and a marble statue of that illustrious monarch adorns the Place Royale or principal square of the city, while his cradle is still shown in

the castle to gratify the curiosity of strangers. Around this noble structure are beautiful gardens tastefully laid out and adorned with shrubs and evergreens. In front is the grand promenade of Pau, where the beauty and fashion, native and foreign, delight to disport themselves in the inviting sunshine. But it is open and free to all; the rich man and the beggar, the mechanic and the wealthy merchant, can alike enjoy the luxury of this beautiful pleasure-ground, and not a flower is touched nor a shrub destroyed by a wanton or malicious hand. Leaning on the ramparts in front of the old castle, and looking southwards, a glorious view presents itself to your gaze. Below you there is the railway station and the beautifully winding river, a handsome stone bridge built in the time of the late Emperor connects the lower part of the town with the villages in the valley on the other side; beyond is a lovely interval of verdure and cultivation, studded here and there with picturesque villas and residences. Then there is the village of Jurançon, celebrated for its wines, and beyond are the hills or heights of the same name, with their vine-clad slopes and hedges, while further still the horizon is broken by the grand and lofty range of the snow-capped Pyrenees, closing in a scene of rare beauty and grandeur. No wonder that, in the numerous throng that on a bright Sunday afternoon frequent this favorite promenade, you may see many, forgetful that they have come out for healthful exercise, sit leisurely down on the rustic benches, and, within hearing of the delightful music of the military band playing in the neighboring square, give themselves up to a complete enjoyment of the wonderful landscape a bountiful nature has spread out before them. From the castle gardens you can extend your ramble to the park; its shady walks are often an agreeable relief from the more exposed position of the grand promenade. And let me tell you that your most essential companion even in the month of January is a linen umbrella or a broad-leaved hat to shelter you from the rays of the noonday sun. Here, before proceeding with any further descriptions of the place, let me say a few words about the climate of Pau. The air is soft and salubrious, which makes it favorable for invalids suffering from diseases, such as affections of the lungs, bronchitis, and asthma, so that the number of persons who go there to spend the winter has become so great that it may be considered as one of the most popular winter stations in the south of France. The temperature is mild, yet it must not be looked upon as a land of perpetual sunshine—it has many bleak and dismal

days ; nevertheless, it may be said with truth that it has no extremes ; and when tempted to complain of the damp and cold at Pau, one is forced to admit that it is certain to be worse elsewhere. The most striking characteristics of the climate is the almost total absence of storms of wind. For many days together the atmosphere is frequently still ; one cannot see even a rustling in the leaves, so calm and tranquil is the air. In this respect it has a great advantage over its rival watering places, Nice and Cannes, and presents a very marked contrast to the stormy climate enjoyed by us who dwell on the shores of the great Atlantic. There are not many towns in France that have improved so much in the space of a few years as this ancient capital of Bearn. Forty years ago Pau was a small and circumscribed town ; its streets were narrow and crooked ; its houses, badly built and ungainly in appearance, were clustered around the castle, as if to gain importance and protection from it. From a population of ten thousand at the time of the first empire, it has increased to thirty thousand. Its streets have been widened and extended, the houses now include handsome hotels and mansions furnished with all the marks of luxury and elegance. The outskirts of the town are studded with magnificent villas, with handsome parks or grounds surrounding them, uniting by their proximity to the town all the advantages of both town and country, and from which can be seen the magic panorama I have already described, extending over the valley and heights of Jurançon and Gelos, and terminating with Mont Né, or the Pic du Midi of the Pyrenees. In every direction, wander which way you please, you enjoy the same richness of scenery, varied, indeed, in effect, but always cheerful and attractive.

It was curious to observe the number of English and American visitors that frequent Pau in the winter season. They do so year after year, and in order to draw them thither the inhabitants exert themselves to make their stay as agreeable as possible. "English spoken here," is very commonly placarded in the shop windows, and very funny English it is too sometimes, but a stranger need have no fear of being unable to get on on account of his not knowing French ; a very slight smattering of the language will suffice for ordinary purposes. I was much amused with an acquaintance I met here from Dublin, who hardly knew a word of French, yet he had travelled all the way alone. He assured me he always got hold of some one who could understand enough English to help him through.

As may be supposed, in such a favorite place of resort, there are amusements to gratify almost every taste. Excellent libraries, where all who are fond of literary pursuits may, for small subscriptions, procure the latest magazines and newest novel, or works of a more solid and interesting character. There is an English Club, easily accessible for strangers, where you may find *The London Times* of the previous day, and numberless other periodicals giving the latest news of the events of the world. And as for out-door sports, if so inclined, you can indulge in them to the fullest of your bent. It was a new sensation for me to join a cricket club in the month of February, to "wield the willow" on the lovely plain of Bellere, or as the poet says, to "urge the flying ball," in sight of the towering Pyrenees.

The pleasures of the chase too were not neglected, and many a hard day's run, for both man and horse, do those mountain foxes give to their pursuers. Jogging along to a meet one morning, I was accosted by my companion with the words, "Well, the fellow who laid out this road was mighty sober at all events." And in truth he must have been (perhaps a member of our Temperance Union, the Mackenzie Blue Ribbon Company, or some other worthy institution of the kind)—it was for miles as straight as a line, not an inch of deviation either to the right or the left. It was one of the grand military highways of the country, built and kept up by Government—wide, straight and level, with deep ditches, and then tall and graceful poplar trees bounding it on either side. My only response to my friend was a silent wish that the sober fellow he alluded to could pay us a visit in Nova Scotia, and give a few much required lessons in an art which he, there in the south of France, had brought to such a wonderful perfection. I have another reminiscence of that day—the story is against myself, and I hardly like to tell it. We found a fox; it proved a strong and wild one. Fortunately, I was well mounted; I had paid an extra ten-franc piece to the livery stable keeper, and secured the best hunter belonging to him—a mare that subsequently took the second place in the Pau steeplechase. Monsieur had many warnings that all he had to do was to give her her head and she would carry him over everything. She very nearly kept the entire promise of her admiring groom. For twenty minutes we had a glorious time; we had flown through hedges, over walls and banks and ditches: at every moment the field was becoming smaller and more select, as our headlong pace and the stiffness of the country caused many to fall out or come to grief.

Gradually I found myself well up with the leading huntsmen; the hounds were in full cry, and my thoughts were eagerly bent on obtaining the enviable trophy of the brush of a Pyrenean fox for my friends across the sea. My mare was still rushing madly at all her fences, in spite of my best efforts to quiet her, when, just as I thought the coveted prize was fairly within my grasp, we had to encounter a bank of a very uncompromising aspect. She refused to top it, as a steady old Irish hunter would have done, but took it at a bound, and the next moment both horse and rider were rolling in the unseen ditch that lay open on the other side to receive us. Unhurt, I soon re-mounted—but I did not get that brush; it was some consolation to me, however, to think that no one else did either, for the fox had reached the forests where further pursuit was impossible.

There is also an excellent race-course at Pau, and every month there is a meeting there, when some good sport may be witnessed in both flat and hurdle races. Government money is added to some of the prizes, which are sufficiently large to induce some of the great racing stables of France, such as Fould's and others, to send representatives there. The people attend these races in crowds, and handsome equipages, and dashing four-in-hands, such as would not disgrace the downs of Epsom or the Park at Goodwood, may be seen at the hippodrome of Pau. They are, of course, largely patronized by the English visitors; but the peasantry, also, for miles around, come together to enjoy this popular pastime. The plain of Bellere, already referred to, is the scene of many brilliant gatherings. Here the ladies enjoy their archery, golf, and croquet, while the exciting game of polo is often indulged in by the gentlemen. There is no lack of interested spectators on these occasions, and many a burst of hearty laughter greets the luckless horseman who has the misfortune to be dismounted in the *mêlée* of the game.

As may easily be gathered from what I have already said, the country around Pau is very rich and highly cultivated; large fields of pasture extend themselves on every side, while the vine is cultivated to perfection. In the near vicinity of the town is the handsome residence of Don Sebastian of Spain. It has a beautiful park surrounding it. The Carlist war is fiercely waging close across the border, and Don Sebastian, the uncle of Don Carlos, has taken refuge in this neutral territory of France. The wife of Don Carlos is also living at Pau, and every tele-

gram and message from the seat of war is eagerly received. Numbers of fugitives have taken shelter here, and many plots are hatched and subscriptions raised to help the royal cause.

There are many pleasant walks or rides in the neighborhood of the town. Meeting a herd or drove of some twenty mules one day (such large and handsome animals they were, too), and observing the bag or sacks with which they were laden, I enquired what it was they carried, and to my surprise I was informed that it was wine, and that the sacks were made of skins or leather. I learned that these mules were bringing from across the Pyrenees the wines of Spain, to be sold in the Bordeaux market. I well remember the picturesque costume of the two men who had charge of this *cortège*, each mounted on mules more spirited than the rest, their gay and cheerful aspect, and the jaunty, independent air with which they exercised control over and guided their charge. It seemed a strange mode of conveyance for merchandise, but across the mountain passes none other was practicable.

Among the many interesting excursions that a stranger can make in the neighborhood of Pau is one to the village of Betharram, about twelve miles distant, which, on account of the historical and religious associations connected with the place, is most inviting. Here the River Gave runs swiftly and deep in its narrow channel, a bridge spans it with a single arch. It is an old and graceful bridge, thickly draped with its clustering ivy, which hangs in verdant and luxurious festoons till it tips the flowing stream beneath.

Close by, you are shown the spot where, as a pious and well-founded tradition tells us, it happened that a young girl picking flowers on the bank, lost her footing and fell into the river. Carried away by the force of the current, she was unable to reach the shore, and was on the point of drowning. In her agony she invoked the Mother of God to come to her assistance, when immediately a beautiful lady appeared holding out the branch of a tree to her, by seizing which she was enabled to regain the land in safety. A chapel is built near to the spot, and the miraculous event is kept in memory by a statue of great antiquity, representing Our Blessed Lady holding out a branch of a tree made of gold, the pious offering of the rescued girl. Hence the name of the place Betharram, a corruption of *beau rameau*, or the beautiful branch, by which it has been known ever since the event, which occurred in the

tenth century. There are also many other traditions connected with this interesting spot, and down to a very recent date the author of a work descriptive of the place, published under the approbation of the bishop, gives numerous instances of miraculous cures wrought through the interception of Our Lady of Betharram. A large seminary adjoins the chapel, no more beautiful or fitting place could be selected for such a college. From the river's edge arise several steep hills, offshoots or spurs of the Pyrenean range. On the summit of the nearest one has been erected a calvary, the steep winding road leading up to it, about a mile in length, is a celebrated way of the Cross. Each of the fourteen stations has a separate chapel, built on the side of the hill, each differing in style and form from the other; the subjects of the several stations are sculptured bas-reliefs, artistically wrought and placed above the altar of each chapel. The fifth station or chapel is a perfect gem, with its three minarets and pointed gothic windows. It is dedicated to St. Louis, both king and saint, who was a great benefactor to the sanctuary and calvary of Betharram. On the plateau or summit of the hill is a life-sized crucifixion; and then a marble pieta or statue of Our Lady of Sorrows, with the body of her crucified Son lying on her knees, a beautiful piece of sculptuary from the chisel of Dumontel, a sculptor of considerable fame. And then to crown the whole is the imposing chapel of the Resurrection—*per pœnas ad gloriam*—through sorrows to glory. No spire surmounts its architectural facade, but an exquisite white marble figure of our ascending Saviour, with outstretched arms, adorns its summit, and seems touchingly to invite us to pass from the sorrows we have been contemplating, and turn to the glories of the future beyond the tomb. Many indulgences are granted to the faithful who make this way of the Cross. I had the happiness of being there on Good Friday, and it is one of my pleasantest reminiscences. A crowd of devout worshippers were ascending the hill at the same time as myself, many of them being the students from the college. At the top a large crowd was gathered, waiting for the tolling of the ninth hour (or three o'clock) from the tower of the church below, and then as it struck the hour, the solemn chant of the *Stabat Mater*, flowing, as it seemed to do, from the hearts as well as the lips of hundreds of the faithful, formed a chorus truly devotional and touching. I lingered for some time in this attractive spot, and then descended the hill with impressions that will not easily be forgotten.

As the winter wears away and the fragrant violets and primroses scattered in wonderful profusion in the hedgerows bespeak the approach of spring, the travellers begin to talk of seeking a cooler atmosphere. Many leave for Biarritz, where the breezes of the Bay of Biscay afford a relief in the heat of summer denied to the inhabitants of the Lower Pyrenees. Some move towards the mountains, and at the celebrated springs of Eaux Bonnes and Eaux Chaudes, in a higher altitude find the desired change. These places are within an easy day's drive from Pau, and are frequently visited by excursionists. Leaving the town on a balmy morning in the month of March, we cross the River Gave and journey towards the mountains. There is little to attract attention till the heights of Jurançon are passed, and the tourist enters the lovely Vallée d'Osseau. It is a vast verdant plain, locked in on either side by the steep mountain heights; it spreads for miles in smiling luxuriance, a curious contrast to the rugged cliffs which frown around. A river winds its way through the fertile meadows, and the villages and cottages of the peasantry are scattered at intervals throughout. A stranger is at once struck by the unusual sight of the number of women working in the fields. It is a curious characteristic of the people that most of the out-door labor is performed by the women. We remarked on this peculiarity, and to our outspoken denunciations of such a wicked perversion of what is considered by us the proper order of things, we learn that the men would be degraded if they took the place of laborers, and that the wife would lose respect for the husband who came out to till the ground, instead of staying at home to mind the children, or taking the grain to market, which alone is thought to become the dignity of his manhood. I have seen women picking potatoes at home in Ireland, but I had to come all the way to the Vallée d'Osseau to see the women holding the plough (and hard ploughing it was, too) while the men were leisurely guiding the oxen. This is no traveller's tale (ladies and gentlemen) but a veritable reminiscence of the Pyrenees, and one the truth of which I can vouch for as an eye-witness. However, they all seemed quite contented with their lot, and it is not for us to quarrel with them on account of their habits, if they suit their own convenience. The custom, no doubt, can be traced to the fact that the country has been so frequently drained of its men, who have had to leave their homes to fight in the armies of their country, or to carry on a guerilla warfare in their own mountain fastnesses, that the cultivation of the soil has

devolved upon the women, who now take it as the natural part they have to play in life. After traversing this charming valley, the road becomes more circuitous and steep; we are ascending the mountains, and finally arrive at Eaux Chaudes—a most picturesque spot, built in a narrow gorge of the mountains, which rise abruptly on either side of it—a torrent is rushing in the depths below, added to by numerous cascades that come tumbling down the mountain sides, glistening brightly in the sun as they fall. The rarer atmosphere and close proximity to the snow above, still lying deep upon the high lands, make it a great change from the heat of the town we left in the morning. A comfortable inn shelters us, and a crackling pine-wood fire warms us for the night. I am bent on doing some mountain climbing, and though the guide I have hired tells me that no one has as yet, this season, gone over the pass, or Col. de Gourzy, as it is called, he thinks that it is practicable to do so, and we resolve to make the attempt next morning, and by that route to make our way to Eaux Bonnes. The rest of our party are to go round by the road to that village, and meet us there in the afternoon. Starting out in the early morn, with stock in hand and wallet of provisions on the back, my guide and I commence the ascent. Half-an-hour's climbing over rocks and bushes, up the steep incline, is enough to make me glad to call a halt to regain my breath. I sit down and look around, and across the ravine we have been mounting, half-way up on the other side, I notice a curious flat or plateau. It has a few cottages, a church with a pretty spire, and a few acres of cultivation on it. It is a strange sort of mountain hamlet, quite shut out of view from the road beneath. Here live some hardy hunters of the Pyrenees, with laws of their own, who owe no allegiance either to France or Spain, living as they do on the borders of the two countries, whose king is the parish priest, and under his paternal government they are said to lead a life of simplicity and peace. Moving upwards, I begin to notice the scarcity of vegetation, we have left the trees below us, and here we cross the face of the bare mountain's side, a false step would be fatal, the cliff extends hundreds of feet below. I am glad to reach the region of snow, it affords a firmer footing. After three hours of toil and scrambling, the summit is at last attained. Unfortunately, the weather is not clear, the clouds are rolling beneath our feet, and shut out the view. I follow the advice of my guide, and wait patiently for the mists to clear away, while discussing the contents of the wallet affords a most refreshing pastime.

At last my patience is rewarded, a view which for grandeur, beauty and extent I never before witnessed is spread out before me. The whole length of the Vallée d'Osseau, with its pretty villages dotted here and there in the plain, lies at my feet, and the smiling farms and houses look like specks upon a vast chart or map. In the distance, with the aid of a good field-glass, I can discern the church spires and chateau of Pau, and nearer and all around me are the snow-clad tops of mountains rising one above the other, with the sharp and pointed Pic du Midi lifting its lofty head above them all.

I can hardly leave the spot ; at each moment some new feature in the scene, before unheeded, attracts my notice, but the clouds are again lowering, and, as a curtain shuts out the daylight, they gather together before me and close up the delightful panorama. I find the descent, though scarcely less fatiguing and dangerous, is far more rapid than the work of the morning, and we get to Eaux Bonnes, on the other side of the pass, by one o'clock in the afternoon. A shout or mountaineer's cry from the guide, announces our approach to the villagers below, and my appearance relieves the anxiety of my friends, who having seen lying on the road the remains of an unfortunate goat, that had fallen from the cliffs above, were, not unnaturally, solicitous for my safe return.

Second Part.

LOURDES.

I am now going to take you, kind hearers, to the most interesting spot in the south of France, one that has become celebrated throughout the world, a place hallowed by some of the most marvellous supernatural manifestations of modern years. I need hardly tell you that I refer to Lourdes, the favored scene of many prodigies. It is almost superfluous to give the history that has caused it to become so celebrated ; but, in order that we may better understand the interest that attaches to it, I must recall its leading incidents. Here in a charming valley, celebrated for its fertility, at the foot of the Pyrenees, there lives a peasantry remarkable for their simplicity and devotion to the Catholic faith. Riches are but little known amongst them, though poverty and want are also

strangers—thanks to their own industrious toil, and the charity of the religious orders of the neighborhood. An humble miller, named Francis Soubrious, lived here about thirty years ago ; he was the father of Bernadette, who was destined to be a strangely favored child. Her infancy was spent in the village of Bartres, but she returned at an early age to her native home in Lourdes. Her constant occupation was tending the flocks of sheep and goats that roamed at large through the hills. Her rosary was ever in her hands when so engaged, and she used to delight to find herself alone in the solitude of nature, where she could give herself up to prayer and contemplation without fear of interruption. She was a weak and delicate girl, and for that reason her education was but little attended to. She could neither read nor write, but was very familiar with her prayers and catechism which her pious parents had carefully taught her. On the 11th of February, 1858, this simple peasant girl was sent by her mother, with her sister and another companion, to collect some sticks, for firewood, along the borders of the river. Her companions, intent upon the work in which they were engaged, had wandered away from her. When near a lonely spot by the mountain side, known as the Grotto of Masabielle, she commenced to say a decade of her rosary. In the face of the steep cliff fronting on the river is a large natural excavation, not very deep, but forming a sheltered grotto. Towards the right and above it is another opening in the rock, extending back and communicating with the grotto below. Suddenly Bernadette is struck by the sound as of a gust of wind, and she turns instinctively towards the poplar trees which she perceives are perfectly motionless. Again she hears the same unaccountable sound, and looking towards the grotto in front of her she sees distinctly a human form, a lady dressed in white, beautiful and resplendent. She described the lady as smiling upon her and beckoning her to approach. The affrighted girl endeavors to make the sign of the cross, but she cannot move her hand ; with a smile the apparition blesses herself, and immediately Bernadette makes the sign of the cross and recites her rosary with fervour. The prayer finished, the beautiful lady disappears, and the voices of her companions, urging her to rejoin them, recalls Bernadette to herself. Returning home, the bewildered child is at first very reticent regarding the wonder she has seen ; but, later on, yielding to the pressing enquiries of her sister, she tells the story of her vision. Her mother hears the secret, and upbraids her as a visionary, and forbids her to go near the grotto

again. This prohibition was very painful to Bernadette, but, on the following Sunday, the mother, at the earnest solicitation of the daughter and of a number of her young companions, gives her permission to revisit the spot. Accompanied by these young friends Bernadette sets out for the grotto. Arrived there, she falls on her knees and recites the rosary ; her companions can see nothing unusual, but looking at Bernadette, they are struck with the extraordinary appearance of her face. It becomes pale and rigid ; her whole figure is immovable. They try to draw her away by the arm, they get in front of her and endeavour to shut out the vision from her sight : but she knows nothing of what passes around her. They send in haste for her mother, but ere she arrives Bernadette has come to herself : she says she has again seen the beautiful lady. These apparitions are repeated frequently, and always in the same spot. Bernadette goes there for fourteen days at the command of the beautiful lady who appears to her. Hundreds of spectators witness the extraordinary appearance of the girl during these trances, and many are still living to attest to the truth of what they saw. During one of these trances, the lighted candle she was accustomed to hold in her hand is taken from her by a bystander, and he applies the flame to her hand : she does not flinch, nor does she seem to feel it, but remains unmoved, rapt in contemplation. The rumours of these wonderful things are spread abroad. The clergy, fearful of some deception, discourage the young peasant ; the civil powers interfere, and she is accused of witchcraft, but still she visits her much-loved grotto. She beseeches the lady to tell her her name, and at the suggestion of the priest she asks, as a sign of supernatural power, that the dried-up rose-bush should be made to bloom at her feet. At last, during one of these visions, the lady declares herself, and says, "I am the Immaculate Conception." Bernadette did not even know the meaning of the words, and hurried to the curé, repeating them to herself, and asked him to explain them to her. At another time she is greeted with the words, "Penitence, penitence, penitence." Again she is told to drink, and for that purpose she turns towards the river, the only water there ; but she is told, "not there, but at the fountain." She stoops and scrapes the solid rock with her fingers, and a spring of water moistens her hands. The withered rose-tree is not made to bloom in the month of February, which would have been a miraculous sign, but one lasting only for a day ; instead of this, a living spring of water bursts forth from the rock, where no spring had been

ever known before, the waters of which are destined to spread from Lourdes through France, from France through Europe, and thence throughout the world—a multitude of wonders, till an incredulous world is forced to recognize the truth, and say, “the finger of God is there.”

Such is a mere outline of the story that first brought the simple peasant of Lourdes into notoriety. I am not going to enter into a detailed argument to prove the supernatural character of the events that are related in connection with the Grotto of Lourdes and the apparitions that are believed to have taken place. I shall only say that every attempt that could possibly be devised to throw discredit upon them, has not only failed to shake the faith of the people of that part of the country, but the very efforts of the skeptical to prove these stories unworthy of belief have tended to establish their truth. The most searching and thorough investigations were held by both the ecclesiastical and civil authorities; commissions were issued, directed to physicians and men of science, to discover the truth, and certain facts and incidents were proved before them, beyond a shadow of a doubt, which admit of no other explanation than that they occurred through a mysterious and divine interposition. The spring, that at first flowed but slowly, increased in volume; the water was used by pious believers to heal the sick. Cures of maladies that had baffled all the skill of medical science were effected; the water was analysed to test its properties, but nothing could be found in it to account for these strange effects. A book entitled, “Our Lady of Lourdes,” has been written by Henri Lassere, and it contains a most complete vindication of the truth of the prodigies alleged to have taken place. He himself is a living witness of his own cure. From almost total blindness his sight was completely restored to him after using the water of the fountain. His work, which is beautifully written, and is full of devotion and instruction, has earned for him the special thanks of the sovereign Pontiff himself, whose letter he publishes as a preface to the volume. He recounts the many arguments of the philosophers and incredulous who attacked the apparition and the subsequent miracles, and he refutes them with an array of witnesses (giving their names, the dates and particulars of each case), so that it is impossible to refuse belief to what he says. Another most carefully prepared work has been published by the Abbé Filhol, with the approval of the Bishop, entitled, “The Recent Miracles of Our Lady of Lourdes,” in which he gives the details of many supernatural occurrences the

best of which is the miraculous cure of Henriette Blanchet, which took place in February, 1870.

I shall venture on a short resumé of the very interesting story as it has been told by this author.

Henriette was a young girl in the service of a very respectable family, named Lalande, of Blaye. She bore an excellent character with her employers, and was a pious and faithful Catholic. On the death of Mme. Lalande, the care of four motherless children fell upon Henriette, and she watched over them with a maternal solicitude. Unhappily her health gave way. She became afflicted with a nervous debility, accompanied with rheumatism affecting her spine, till at length she was hardly able to stand or hold herself upright. Her kind-hearted master, who valued her affection for his children, and which was entirely reciprocated by them, consulted a doctor of distinction at Bordeaux, and she was taken by him to a hydropathic establishment for the treatment of her disease. Here she received a slight, but only temporary relief, and afterwards rapidly became worse; the doctors, who were again consulted, declared that she had all the symptoms of a spinal disease for which they could hope for no cure. The hydropathic system was tried a second time, but with no good result; sulphur and sea-water baths were tried in vain; and at length, as a last resort, after exhausting all the remedies that medical science could suggest, the doctor held out a faint hope that relief might be obtained by the painful operation of cauterization. He desired that the attempt should be made, and underwent the torture with the patience and resignation of a martyr. A book, recounting the wonderful cures that had followed the pious use of the water of the fountain at Lourdes, was happily placed in her hands, and she read it with devout curiosity. The doctors had told her that she had nothing more to hope for from their hands. "You mean to say, then," exclaimed the unhappy girl, "that I can only look to God to effect a cure." "Yes, that is my opinion," said the doctor. His name was Berchon: I mention it, as he has attested to the truth of this story. She resolved to seek from on high the blessing that no human aid could procure for her. With a pious faith in the efficacy of prayer, Henriette, who was now a confirmed cripple, scarcely able to move, and that only with pain and by the help of crutches, commenced on the 28th January, 1870, a novena to our Lady of Lourdes, to finish on the 2nd February.

On the morning of that day, the Feast of the Purification, she arose from her bed, and to her inexpressible joy and astonishment, she found that she could move without the assistance of the crutches she had taken up in her hands. She made a few timid steps at first, but, finding no difficulty, she walked several times around the room. She threw herself on her knees, and, with tears of gratitude in her eyes, returned thanks for the signal favor she had received. M. Lalande, on his return from Bordeaux, where he had gone on business, was the first to see her after her wonderful cure, and, to his amazement, found her coming down stairs without any assistance. On the 13th of February, Henriette made a visit to the Grotto of Lourdes, accompanied by M. Lalande and his children ; there she presented her crutches to Our Lady of Lourdes, and they are still hanging from the rock of the grotto, where I myself have seen them, to testify to the merciful power that had restored her to health. In the face of so many witnesses to these prodigies, the bishop and clergy could not refuse to lend their sanction to the devotion of the people. But it was not till after four years of study and inquiry that the Bishop of Tarbes (in which diocese Lourdes is situate), in an eloquent and convincing pastoral, published his approbation. The urgent solicitations of Bernadette, to have the expressed wishes of the "Beautiful Lady" who had appeared to her carried out, were complied with. She had said, "I wish that a sanctuary should be erected on this spot, and that people should come here in procession to worship." We shall see how faithfully that wish has been respected.

On the height of the rock above the grotto, a most beautiful gothic chapel has been built. The offerings of the thousands of pilgrims who flocked to do homage at the shrine of the grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes were so munificent, the gifts of thanksgiving for signal blessings and favors were so frequent and liberal, that there was no want of funds wherewith to make this sanctuary one of an elegance and richness worthy of the faith of the people. From the nature of the rocky eminence of its site, the cost and difficulty of building were very great ; but the genius of the architect has overcome every obstacle, and produced a work of art that quite baffles my power of description. The interior is richly ornamented, the ceiling and walls are adorned with numberless banners and flags, left by pilgrims as mementoes of their visits. Every diocese, and I might almost say every parish in France, is represented by the banner of the pilgrimage which at one time or another assembled

there. Germany, Austria, Belgium, Spain, England, and America, are all represented as having done homage at this holy shrine, and it was with a feeling of pride that I noticed the handsome banner of the Canadian pilgrimage amongst the number, with a picture of the Church of Notre Dame of Montreal, and an inscription dedicating it to Our Lady of Lourdes. Strange as it may seem, the devotion of Ireland, the land of saints, has not yet paid its tribute of love, where almost every other Catholic nationality has left its offering. All around are votive gifts, candelabra, gold crosses, hearts and statues, each telling of some extraordinary favor received through the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes. Within the chaste communion rail around the high altar is a carpet of a most elegant design and color; it is made of Berlin wool, and was worked by the hands of the ladies of France; the border is formed of a scroll representing the beads of the rosary, and within is worked or stitched the inscription, "From the Ladies of France to Our Lady of Lourdes." Within each alcove, sixteen in number, around the chapel, is an altar and a confessional, each of them remarkable for its beauty; below the main chapel is the vaulted crypt, with its richly ornamented altars, and with massive pillars supporting the structure above. Thus has been accomplished the first part of Our Lady's desire, that a chapel should be erected over the place of her apparitions. I shall now turn to the second part, namely, that people should go there in processions.

It was my good fortune to be at Pau during the season of Lent. At the parish Church of St Martin, a Dominican Father, Pere Mathieu, a man celebrated in France for his learning and eloquence was preaching the Careme and Jubilee. His daily discourses were attended by thousands. After preaching a retreat for the ladies he devoted the latter part of Lent to instructing the men. The Jubilee had been proclaimed and the Catholic population of the town responded to the call with eagerness and devotion. Long processions of men and women might be seen, almost daily, wending their way through the streets from church to church, led by the clergy in their robes and reciting or chaunting the prayers prescribed to gain the Indulgences. It was brought to a close on Easter Sunday. The noble Church of St Martin was crowded to hear the parting words of the eloquent Dominican. It was a glorious sight to behold three thousand men approach the altar rails that morning. But if the religious fervour of the people was great on that occasion, how shall I describe it when the announcement was made of

a general pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes from the whole diocese of Bayonne. Easter Monday was named for the event. At an early hour the several churches in Pau were filled with the intending pilgrims awaiting to receive from the hands of the priests the small red cross or badge of the pilgrimage. It was marvellous with what order and regularity every thing was conducted. Each man, (I do not say person, for on this occasion the women were not to be included,) had his railway ticket, and each ticket was plainly numbered. Walking in procession through the town amid a throng of enthusiastic spectators, a handsome silk banner with a painting representing St Martin giving his cloak to cover the poor beggar, carried in front of us, we arrived at the station. With such a crowd confusion seemed to be inevitable but nothing of the sort occurred, on the railway carriages were large placards numbered in rotation corresponding with the numbers of the tickets of the travellers, so that each one found his place without any difficulty.—The number of my ticket took me to a carriage in which were seated the Curé of St Martin and Pere Mathieu, a mark of distinction I had no idea would be conferred on me, under these happy auspices I commenced my pilgrimage to Lourdes. It was curious to watch the light-hearted vivacity of the crowd as they hurried to the carriages, and to observe the variety of their picturesque costumes.—They were almost all provided with sacks or bags which they carried across their shoulders and contained their two days provisions. After some delay the train starts on its journey, and the hymn Ave Maris Stella is chaunted from car to car. We pass the village of Betharram and as its chapel and calvary meet the eye of our good monk, he proposes that we should salute our Lady of Betharram, and at once intones the Magnificat in her honor. And now, as we approach our destination, all are anxious to catch a first glimpse of the revered grotto, which may be plainly seen from the passing train. The loudest chorus yet, as it swells from more than a thousand voices, tells us that it is in sight. Yes, there it is, with its ever burning lights in front of the marble statue in the niche, the very spot where the "Beautiful Lady" herself appeared, the iron railing enclosing it, and the numerous crutches, splints and chairs brought there by cripples and left in remembrance of their cures. We arrive at the village of Lourdes, and disperse in different directions, train after train arrives bringing fresh additions to our numbers, from Bayonne, Pau, Orthes, Oleron and other places, till we form an army of ten

thousand men, accompanied by 300 priests. Four o'clock is named for the general rendezvous on the road leading to the town—each parish has its small standard round which each pilgrim belonging to it finds his place—we march four deep, chaunting hymns of praise as we proceed. The head of the vast procession reaches the grotto ere the end has scarcely left the town. The plateau in front and beyond and before the grotto is densely packed. The burning words of the orator Pere Mathieu, who preached a most impressive sermon, fail to reach the ears of many, so great is the extent of ground covered by the multitude. An altar is erected in front of the grotto and the venerable Bishops of Tarbes and of Bayonne attended by a number of clergymen mount its steps—the shades of evening are closing in upon the scene—each pilgrim carries a long candle or taper in his hand, and one by one they are lighted in all directions around, presenting at last the appearance of a sea of lights. The basilica above is also illuminated with hundreds of twinkling lamps—the solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is commenced—the *Os alutaris* is intoned—the Litany of Loretto, and the *Tantum ergo*—such a chorus I never heard before. Ten thousand voices are joined in unison, ten thousand hearts are lifted up in prayer, the rocks resound with a volume of song, in praise, thanksgiving and adoration. Surely with the devotion of such a fervent host of worshippers it must have pierced beyond the skies.

The ceremony at the grotto over, the procession moves up the winding road that leads to the sanctuary above. It was a wonderful sight to look down from the height of the colonnade around the chapel upon that sea of glimmering lights, and watch it gradually moving like a stream of fire up the winding path. The procession passed around the church and slowly wending its way back again to the town quietly dispersed. I had taken the precaution to secure a room at the hotel for some days in advance, this I shared with my companion, Father Fitzpatrick, an Irish priest, who was spending the winter in the South of France in search of health. To provide for such a sudden and enormous accession to its population the ordinary accommodations of the town of Lourdes were quite inadequate, many a pilgrim spent the night in the open air. But sleep forsook me after the excitement of the day, and I wandered out again at night to revisit the chapel. All along the road the numerous sheds erected for the purpose of shelter were crowded with pilgrims, the chapel itself was full and hundreds of

priests were busy in the confessionals. At midnight masses were begun at every altar and from that hour till late in the day the Holy Sacrifice was continually offered till upwards of three hundred masses had been said. My Reverend companion had long to wait for his turn before he could secure an altar, and had to serve the masses of two of his brother priests before he could obtain the necessary vestments for himself. Thousands of pilgrims approached the altar rails, and after their thanksgivings retired from the chapel to allow others to succeed them, keeping up an uninterrupted stream of pious communicants. At ten o'clock the crowd gathers on the upper heights of the mountain where the final ceremonies of the pilgrimage are to take place. Here in the presence of the assembled thousands, with the blue vault of heaven for a canopy, a solemn high mass is celebrated, a glowing sermon is preached by a Franciscan monk, and the pilgrimage of the diocese of Bayonne for the year 1875 is closed.

Thus it has been the custom to fulfil the second desire expressed to Bernadette at the grotto.

I have given you but a mere outline of one of many hundreds of pilgrimages, not perhaps quite so large, but equally enthusiastic, that yearly crowd towards this hallowed place. It is asserted, and I believe with truth, that since the days of the Crusades no such religious enthusiasm has so stirred up the hearts of the people of France as that which has been evoked by the story of the simple peasant of the Pyrenees. The effect has been to cause the once obscure village of Lourdes to become what may be called the sanctuary of France. The Dominicans, Franciscans and Jesuits have founded large and handsome houses. There are hospitals for the sick, and asylums for the aged and infirm, refuges under the direction of religious both male and female, for pilgrims whose devotion has drawn them towards the shrine of Our Blessed Lady. Along the road side leading from the town to the grotto are numerous shops displaying for sale, statues, pictures, beads, medals and all kinds of souvenirs of the place and the history attaching to it; and they are eagerly purchased by visitors who then take them and touch with them the rock where the mysterious visions of Bernadette took place. It is not within my province to suggest any reflections on the facts I have endeavoured but very imperfectly to narrate, or to allude to the feelings that such a recital should excite. These I must leave to the promptings of the hearts of my hearers. I shall only say for my

own part that I shall ever retain a most lively sense of gratitude for the providential good fortune that directed my steps to Lourdes.

Before concluding, however, there is one point to which, in a meeting like the present, assembled as it is for the purpose of encouraging and assisting the grand cause of Temperance, I must not forget to allude. It is the remarkable sobriety of the people of the Pyrenees. It is almost as characteristic of them as the simplicity of their faith and their devotion to the Catholic Church for which they are renowned. I have met the peasantry of the country under many different circumstances, I have met them on the roads returning from the town with their teams of oxen, singing gaily perhaps as they pass, but with a natural light-heartedness of feeling that it required no intoxicating stimulant to excite. I have seen them in their wayside inns drinking the simple wines of the country and enjoying them most thoroughly but never to excess. I have seen them in the crowded market of Pau, at their labors in the fields and in the excitement of the race-course, and I can truly say that during a residence of nearly four months in their country, I never saw a drunken man amongst them.

Such are a few of my reminiscences of a winter in the South of France, a season I shall always look back upon with feelings of satisfaction and pleasure. We have now accomplished our journey and returned to our homes. Though we live in a land with a colder and less genial climate than the country we have been visiting, it still rests with ourselves to make it an equally happy one. By building on the solid foundation of Christian Faith and ornamenting the structure with the graces of a moral, sober and industrious people, we shall be enabled to construct for ourselves a home the possession of which will leave us no reason to be envious of the advantages of others.

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